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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a course for mentally handicapped students designed to help them to develop practical living skills. The class involves four one-semester units: health and safety; home living; social skills; and job skills. The subjects studied in each of these units are outlined. Information concerning the resources, planning, instruction, and evaluation involved with this course is provided. A 22-item bibliography also is included. (DB)

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Social Studies Instruction for Special Students

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Social Science Discipline/Issue: Civics, Economics, Sociology
Grade Level: Middle and High School

LIFE SKILLS CLASS FOR SPECIAL STUDENTS

The Life Skills course was organized after the parent of an Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH) student asked about help for their child in the area of developing practical living skills. The course is offered each semester for special education students. There are four different, one semester, units. The class is planned with three goals in mind: the development of practical daily living skills; the implementation of skills training through hands on and participation instruction; and the development of students' study guides which later serve them as a reference. Basic skills, such as reading, writing, and problem solving are included in the planning. Little objective evaluation is used. Most evaluation is done by the teachers' observation of the students daily participation. Each semester is different and gives the student 1/2 credit in Social Studies. Each semesters unit is divided into 8 to 10 related topics of study of aspects of living in the community. A limit of 10 students was set for the class. At present there are seven from the EMH class, two from Continuing Education (students at risk), and one Learning Disable student.

The four semesters have been planned and taught. Contents of the Life Skills course can be found at the conclusion of this paper.

Resources

In order to cover topics which have been addressed in these units a great deal of research has been done. There are many places from which to draw:

1. School, public, and university libraries
2. Home Economic, health, and learning disabilities department in schools
3. Public Health Department
4. Free materials and audio visual aids companies
5. Local businesses
6. Commercial books
7. Fellow teachers

Planning

Each unit of study is planned for a 2 week or so period of time, depending on the subject and interest of the class. Instructions regarding what is to be accomplished are given. Some teaching techniques being used are lecture, reading, class discussion, guest speakers, video tapes, filmstrips, and film. The following ways can be used to help students apply, develop, review, and evaluate their efforts:

1. Lecture using charts and overhead transparencies
   (to gain basic information)
2. Large group discussion
   (for questions and evaluation)
3. Role play
   (to apply learning)
4. Brainstorming

(to be creative)

5. Commercial games
   (to review information)
6. Word mazes
   (to review)
7. Crossword puzzles
   (to review)

Instruction

Students with various ability levels are involved, so lesson plans must be adapted to suit their individual needs. Peer tutoring, the "buddy system", is used to aid students who need individual help. A variety of activities is chosen to encourage active participation. Use of as many audio visuals as possible is employed, because many of these students require representative samples that are concrete. The use of this type of material seems to increase the students ability to comprehend the material.

Communication is the key to a successful class of this type. The way you communicate can effect your ability to build a good relationship with students. Here are some ideas to remember as you communicate with special students:

1. Watch body language
2. Use a warm tone of voice
3. Listen to students
4. Make questions open ended
5. Avoid starting questions with "why"
6. Reflect the feeling you hear from the students
7. Be human
8. Confront a student directly if there is a discrepancy in what they are saying

Evaluation

Evaluation can be done in many ways. Some tests and quizzes are given, which the students sometimes check themselves or may be checked by peers. A rating scale can be helpful, in that way a continuous observation of the student can be compiled. At present, a daily rating scale of 1-4 is used, 4 being good participation. Students should be helped to formulate a plan to solve problems, make sure it is the students plan and not yours. Teachers should try and help students to solve problems and plan for alternatives.

Life Skills I Health and Safety

Unit 1 Self-concept and values clarification

Unit 2 Personal hygiene
- A. Learning about self
- B. Good health
- C. Grooming

Unit 3 Physical fitness
- A. Exercise
- B. Eating right

Unit 4 Proper dress
- A. Informal
- B. Formal
- C. Work

Unit 5 Basic first aid
- A. Dangers
- B. Emergencies
- C. Home needs

Unit 6 Drug education
- A. Legal
- B. Illegal

Unit 7 Abuse

Unit 8 Sex education

Life Skills II Home Living

Unit 1 Economics
- A. Monthly bills
- B. Budgeting
- C. Rent
- D. Utilities

Unit 2 Auto upkeep
- A. Payments
- B. Upkeep
- C. Insurance

Unit 3 Shopping
- A. Clothing
- B. Food
- C. House hold goods

Unit 4 Home upkeep
- A. Cleaning
- B. Repairs
- C. Furnishing

Unit 5 Home Safety
- A. Electricity
- B. Furnace
- C. Cooking
- D. Firearms

Unit 6 Personal Maintenance
- A. Washing clothes
- B. Ironing
- C. Mending

Unit 7 Cooking
- A. Shopping
- B. Equipment
- C. Terminology

D. Simple cooking

Life Skills III Social Skills

- Unit 1 Self-concept/self esteem
- Unit 2 Feelings
  - A. Praise (giving and taking)
  - B. Criticism
  - C. Prejudice
  - D. Stress
- Unit 3 Manners
  - A. Personal
  - B. Home
  - C. Work
- Unit 4 Time management
  - A. Day to day
  - B. Appointments
  - C. Work
- Unit 5 Dating
  - A. Roles
  - B. Rules
- Unit 6 Marriage
  - A. Planning
  - B. Financing
  - C. Laws
- Unit 7 Family Roles
  - A. Husband/wife
  - B. Parenting
- Unit 8 Law
  - A. Personal
  - B. Community
  - C. Employment
- Unit 9 Recreation

Life Skills IV Job skills

Unit 1 Employment
- A. Sources
- B. Applications
- C. Interviews

Unit 2 Income
- A. Paycheck
- B. Fringe benefits

Unit 3 Money

Unit 4 Banking
- A. Checking account
- B. Savings account

Unit 5 Insurance
- A. Life
- B. Health
- C. Car
- D. Home

Unit 6 Taxes
- A Income
- B. State
- C. Property

Unit 7 Registration
- A. Voting
- B. Selective service

Unit 8 Retirement
- A. Social security
- B. Investments

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